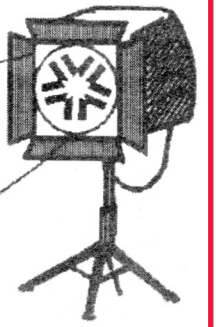


DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA OFFICE ON AGING

Spotlight On Aging



VOLUME XVIII, ISSUE 12

A newsletter for D.C. Seniors

December 2003

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE



By E. Veronica Pace

It's the holiday season — a great opportunity to spend time with family and friends, especially the homebound elderly. Include those who may be isolated in your plans. Go spend a few hours with them or talk to them on the phone. Give the gift of your time and companionship to someone you know.

I am very thankful for the turnout of the senior community at Citizen Summit III. Senior Power was evident in the 30 percent of the participants who were seniors. We were the most represented group present, and we were instrumental in the decisions that were made at the tables.

I say "we" because as many of you are aware, I am not only an advocate for seniors as the executive director of this agency, but I also am a senior citizen myself. Let's make sure that we are always a part of the process and at the table when decisions are made about our city.

Congratulations to Ms. Senior D.C. 2003 Ellen Odellas Van Edwards for successfully competing in the Ms. Senior America Pageant. She was awarded the Konze award for her volunteer work with children.

Mrs. Van Edwards and the other ladies of the D.C. Senior America Cameo Club live active lifestyles, give back to their communities and foster the younger generation. They are certainly "Aging with Style!"

Happy holidays to all!

You're Invited to a Holiday Party

Join other seniors at the
D.C. Office on Aging's
Annual Senior Citizens
Holiday Celebration.

December 10 • 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.
at the D.C. Armory

Call 202-724-5626 for Free tickets.

Ms. Senior D.C. Brings Back a Prize!

Ms Senior D.C. 2003 was one of 30 contestants who competed in the Ms. Senior America Pageant held in November in Reno, Nev.

Women 60 years of age and older were judged on a personal interview with the judges, their philosophy of life, a talent segment and an evening gown competition. Talent and interview components were each worth 30 percent of the score, while philosophy of life and evening gown each received 20 percent of the final score for each contestant.

Ellen Odellas Van Edwards wore a beautiful white gown adorned with rhinestones and pearls and a flattering stole across her shoulders. In the evening gown competition she flung the stole around like a pro showing off the full gown with spaghetti straps.

During the talent competition, she entertained the crowd as "Hajji D. Clown" and performed magic tricks and comedy. Her costume was very colorful and her makeup so good, it was hard to tell this was the same lady who was presented so elegantly in the evening gown competition from the previous day.

Sandra Greco, a doctor from New Jersey, was crowned the winner of the pageant. She sang "Misty" during her talent presentation. She also told the crowd in her philosophy of life that she was a doctor, social worker and teacher who believed in staying active.

Second Runner-up was Beth Weems Pirtle from Texas, also stunning in a beautiful red-and-gold-sequined gown. She entertained the crowd during her talent presentation with her sign language interpretation of the medley "Wind Beneath My Wings" and the chimp and monkey love song. Second runner-up was Ms. California

Paula Swornay, who had a beautiful voice and stage presentation and sang "Love is Where You Find It."

Van Edwards was one of three recipients of the Louise J. Konze Award, which honors Senior America women for volunteer service to children. The first prize of \$5,000 was awarded to Ms. Mississippi Gladys Hughes for her work with the Picayune Onstage Children's Theatre.

Second Prize and \$3,000 was awarded to Pat King a contestant in the Ms. Virginia Senior America Pageant for her work with last chance children at a local charter school and Optimist International.

Third prize and \$2,000 was awarded to Van Edwards, Ms. Senior D.C., for her work with the Children's Inn at NIH as part of the Capitol Klowns. Ms. Van Edwards has been a member of Capitol Klowns since the late 1970s, and the group has contributed more than \$64,000, their time and their expertise to this worthwhile charity.

The Ms. Senior America Pageant is the world's first and foremost pageant to emphasize and give honor to women who have reached the "age of elegance." It is a search for the gracious lady who best exemplifies the dignity, maturity and inner beauty of all senior Americans. The Ms. Senior America Pageant philosophy is based upon the belief that seniors are the foundation of America, and our most valuable treasure. Senior America Inc. was founded by Al Mott, and the first national pageant was held in 1980 in Atlantic City, N.J.

If you are interested in participating in the Ms. Senior District of Columbia pageant and you are a District resident 60 years of age or older, contact Gwen Coleman, pageant chair, at 202-289-1510, ext. 170/171.



Ellen Odellas Van Edwards



GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

ANTHONY A. WILLIAMS, MAYOR

D.C. OFFICE ON AGING NEWSLETTER

A Preliminary Report on Citizen Summit III



Mayor Anthony A. Williams leads one of his constituents to her table.

More than 2,800 residents of the District of Columbia gathered on November 15 at the Washington Convention Center to help plan the future of the city. Over the course of the day-long forum, participants in Citizen Summit III discussed their long-term vision for the future of the District and weighed trade-offs between policy options to address critical challenges facing the city.

Citizen Summit III was convened by Mayor Anthony Williams and attended by several members of the City Council, including Council Chairman Linda Cropp, and numerous ANC Commissioners. The results of Citizen Summit III will be used by Mayor Williams to develop the Citywide Strategic Plan, which sets out the programs and services that will be put in place by government agencies. Results will shape budget priorities for the 2005 city budget.



Seniors helped lead the process as facilitators.

Citizen Summit III is part of Mayor Williams' Neighborhood Action initiative to engage the public in the city's governance. Over the past four years, Neighborhood Action has engaged more than 10,000 people in setting the city's priorities.

Real Challenges, Real Choices

Participants in Citizen Summit III were asked to consider programs and policies that address three of the most important

challenges facing the city:

- Providing quality education
- Making neighborhoods safer
- Expanding opportunities for our residents

In small groups, citizens worked with trained facilitators to determine the strengths and weaknesses of the different options that had been presented to them, as well as identify other options.

Ideas generated in these discussions were collected through laptop computers at each table. Participants also used polling keypads to prioritize the options and shape how the city uses its resources to address the challenges.

Providing Quality Education

Five options for improving the quality of education in the District were presented to participants. In addition, a sixth option emerged from the table discussions: make schools safer for learning.

Several strong themes emerged. Participants liked the breadth of the options and strongly supported the idea of providing "wrap around" services, noting that "education starts with family" and the importance of taking "a holistic approach" to education.

They also thought we should improve the quality of our teachers and focus on early childhood education. Participants suggested that we should use our school buildings to support non-traditional learning opportunities, such as adult and senior education and vocational training.

Attendees wanted to know how the District defines teacher quality and how we would assure that early childhood education prepared children for school.

They were also concerned about the finances of the school system. On one hand, they said it is important to offer competitive pay for teachers. On the other hand, they said spending more money would not fix all of the schools' problems.

They were also concerned that schools need more parental involvement as well as more partnerships with local universities, social organizations and businesses.

Citizens were also asked to prioritize the options for improving education. The top three priorities were:

1. Make schools safer;
2. Improve the quality of teaching; and
3. Provide "wrap around" social services to students.

Making Neighborhoods Safer

Participants were also presented with five options for making neighborhoods safer in the District. A sixth option developed during the discussion: strengthen relationships between the community and the police.

During the table discussions, several themes surfaced around public safety options. Attendees strongly supported reforming the juvenile justice system and reducing neighborhood blight — because "early intervention is prevention." People also encouraged more community responsibility, suggesting that the city should "involve kids and families in keeping their neighborhoods clean."

Citizens called for a visible and responsive connection between officers and neighborhoods, a need to strike a balance between enforcement and community policing. While some supported enforcement of low-level crimes, others were concerned about the consequences that approach might have on community policing efforts.



Office on Aging Executive Director E. Veronica Pace and AARP's D.C. State Director Mimi Castaldi advocate for seniors.

Similarly, while many residents supported focusing additional police attention on "hot spots," others worried that some areas wouldn't receive enough attention, or that certain neighborhoods would be stigmatized.

Participants were also asked to prioritize the options for making neighborhoods safer. The top three priorities were:

1. Reform the juvenile justice system;
2. Strengthen relationships between community and police; and
3. Focus enforcement and services on high-risk populations and ex-offenders to prevent a return to crime.

Expanding Opportunities for Our Residents

Job Opportunities and Housing

Participants were presented with three options each for expanding access to jobs and access to housing in the District. Citizens identified additional options in each area: create access by increasing the minimum wage to a living wage, and create housing opportunities for middle income and working class residents.

Attendees strongly supported all of the job options, noting their connection to each other. People said training needs to be relevant to jobs (through apprenticeships and vocational training), and the District needs to expand literacy programs because "literacy is a gateway to employment." It is important to bring new jobs to DC and validate the importance of entry-

level jobs because "people need incentives" to succeed.

Citizens also strongly supported the need for affordable housing and housing for persons with special needs. In particular, citizens require more training and information on how to access housing assistance, and affordable housing should be distributed across every ward of the city.

Participants were asked to prioritize the options for job and housing opportunities. The top priorities for jobs were to create access to jobs by supporting a living wage and strengthen the job apprenticeship system. Top housing priorities were to support the development of affordable housing units and increase housing opportunities for middle income and working class residents.

Health Care

Participants were presented with five options for expanding access to health care in the District. Citizens strongly support the need to expand health care for the uninsured and for seniors. In addition, many emphasized the need for substance abuse treatment: "Many of the city's problems are multifaceted, but few don't have a link to substance abuse. We need to solve the problem, not the symptom."

Residents are concerned that the Health Care Alliance is not working, and that we need better distribution of health-care clinics, especially in Southeast and east of the River. They also want more coordination between drug treatment, housing, mental health, drug use prevention services, and the correction systems.

The top health care priorities were:

1. Expand healthcare for the uninsured; and
2. Plan for expanded services for the aging population.

Budget Trade Offs

After they had spent half the day reviewing and evaluating the array of options presented to address the challenges of education, public safety and opportunities for all residents, participants were asked to make budget trade offs between the options. Participants were asked to determine which options they would vote for given a budget of \$60 million.

The following list of options is presented in the order of importance that participants gave them (from most important to least important), given limited resources:

1. Expand health care for the uninsured
2. Support the development of affordable housing units
3. Strengthen the job apprenticeship system
4. Expand adult literacy programs
5. Add more officers citywide with special focus on "hot spots"

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A lively discussion, with seniors represented

6. Reform the juvenile justice system

7. Provide focused support for low-income youth between the ages of 13 to 24

8. Begin the education process early in childhood

9. Improve the quality of teaching

10. Accelerate the renovation of schools by consolidating underused facilities

11. Plan for expanded services for the aging population

12. Provide “wrap around” social services to students

13. Reduce neighborhood blight

14. Provide tax relief

15. Increase hiring of District residents by government contractors

16. Develop housing for residents with special needs

17. Focus enforcement and services on high-risk populations and ex-offenders

18. Expand housing production to support
- growth of DC population

19. Expand substance abuse treatment and prevention

20. Increase prevention and treatment of HIV/AIDS

21. Increase enforcement of low-level crimes

22. Reduce cases of infant mortality and cases of low birth-weight babies

Vision for an Inclusive City

The last item on the Summit agenda was a presentation of a *Draft Vision for Washington’s Future*. The overarching goal of the Vision is to grow a more inclusive city, in which the benefits of growth are spread more evenly and the city’s strengths are leveraged to bridge social, physical, and economic divides. After the Mayor provided

a 20-minute presentation, citizens were asked how important the goal of an inclusive city was to them. Of those present, 61 percent said the goal should be the city’s highest priority; 71 percent felt the Vision was on target or mostly on target.

Three challenges for growing a more inclusive city were outlined in the presentation, each accompanied by preliminary strategies. For each challenge, participants were asked to state what strategies they liked, and what they thought was missing.

The Vision’s first challenge is *Creating Successful Neighborhoods*. Overall, participants liked the strategies to create “community anchors” (neighborhood centers). They also liked the focus on public transportation, pedestrian areas, and schools as points of contact for the neighborhoods. There was also support for the concept of restoring and reinvigorating neighborhoods, rather than tearing down and starting over. Participants stated that what was missing was stronger discussion of health care facilities, recreation centers and libraries, and more focus on the area east of the Anacostia River. While many agreed that we should celebrate the uniqueness of our neighborhoods, some stated that the emphasis should be to unify rather than to emphasize boundaries.

The Vision’s second challenge is *Access to Education and Jobs*. Overall, participants liked the strategies to increase partnerships between our K-12 schools and our universities, institutions and businesses. Participants also liked the idea of linking a larger share of local jobs to DC residents. Participants stated that what was missing was more discussion of the need for parking to attract retail and other development to the city. Another concern was to make sure that new job op-

portunities included high-paying, high-skilled jobs as well as low-level service jobs.

The Vision’s third challenge is *Connecting the Whole City*, with a focus on physical connections across the city. Overall, participants liked the proposed light rail system, and proposals for more parks and green space. Participants stated that what was missing was a discussion of human and economic connections, as well as physical connections. Some observed that connections must be multi-directional and must occur on several levels — between neighborhoods, between downtown and the rest of the city, and between the city and the region.

Complete results from Citizen Summit III will be available in the coming weeks at the Neighborhood Action Web site: www.neighborhoodaction.dc.gov.



Laying out the framework and discussing the issues

Who Attended Citizen Summit III?

Neighborhood Action sought to represent the city’s diversity. Participants’ demographics are compared below to the city’s actual make up.

Gender	Nov. 15 Actual					
	Female	68%	53%	\$75,000 - 99,000	11%	9%
	Male	32%	47%	\$100,000 – 149,999	9%	8%
Age				\$150,000 – 199,999	7%	8%
	17 and under	7%	20%	Have a Disability		
	18-24	5%	13%	Yes	27%	
	25-34	10%	18%	No	73%	
	35-44	14%	15%	Ethnicity		
	45-54	18%	13%	Hispanic	11%	8%
	55-64	16%	9%	Non-Hispanic	89%	92%
Household Income	65 and better	30%	12%	African-American	58%	60%
	Less than \$25,000	33%	32%	Asian/Pacific Islander	10%	3%
	\$25,000 - 49,999	24%	27%	Caucasian	16%	31%
	\$50,000 - 74,999	17%	16%	Native American	0%	0.3%
				Mixed Race	8%	2%
				Other Race	4%	4%
				Geography		
				Ward 1	15%	13%
				Ward 2	10%	12%
				Ward 3	7%	13%
				Ward 4	14%	13%
				Ward 5	16%	13%
				Ward 6	11%	12%
				Ward 7	12%	12%
				Ward 8	10%	12%
				Non-Resident	6%	—

D.C. OFFICE ON AGING NEWSLETTER

Help is Available for Seniors With Drug and Alcohol Problems

According to the 2001 Census, there are 92,000 seniors (age 50 and older) in Washington, D.C., and as many as 17 percent are affected by substance abuse. This is called the "Silent Epidemic," which impacts District seniors who abuse alcohol and prescription drugs.

An alarming number of seniors in the metropolitan area are engaging in various self-destructive forms of substance abuse. In response to a need for action, Substance Abuse Awareness for Seniors (SAAS) was created by the Addiction Prevention and Recovery Administration (APRA) to effectively address and eliminate this problem.

APRA's Office of Special Populations implemented the seniors program to break this silence. The program helps coordinate alcohol, tobacco and other drug prevention programs, as well as education, advocacy and counseling services for seniors (and their family members) living with chemical dependency.

SAAS grew from a desire for an extensive community outreach campaign. However, in recent months, APRA has actively expanded the scope of SAAS activities to include an ambitious plan for prevention and treatment of substance abusing seniors.

Some of the problems stem from the fact that many seniors are not taking their medications correctly. Some are sharing medications, while others are not making their various doctors aware of all the medications they are taking.

Other problems result from mixing alcohol with prescription drugs. Also, many seniors don't know the side effects of their medications or even what they are prescribed for.

Asking questions and asking for help is also difficult for many seniors. SAAS believes that education is power — what you don't know can harm you.

Senior-focused agencies and institutions are welcome to refer their staff to comprehensive training

and literature that can help the city better assist and serve its aging population. APRA hopes to inspire future collaborations to ensure that seniors are educated, screened and referred to the appropriate services.

The goal is to help provide practical recommendations for incorporating an understanding of this problem into practice.

The great news is that once an older person accesses treatment they have the highest rate of recovery of any age group. APRA will continue to make treatment and recovery available to everyone.

It is never too late to change a life. It is never too late for recovery. True happiness cannot be found in a bottle or a pill. Give yourself a chance. Let us offer you the gift of recovery with the dignity and respect you deserve.

For more information, contact (202) 442-9171. Or visit APRA on the web at: <http://dchealth.dc.gov>.

Winter Fire Safety for D.C. Residents

When Washington, D.C. residents think of winter, we often think of holiday parties, festive decorations, and glowing fireplaces. What we may not realize is that December, January and February are the leading months for home fires and home fire deaths in the U.S. On average, more than one-third of U.S. home fire deaths occur during the winter months. From December 2001 to February 2002, four fatalities occurred, three of whom were seniors.

Home heating fires are most commonly caused by inadequate chimney cleaning, placing things that can burn too close to space and portable heaters, fueling errors involving liquid or gas fueled heaters, and flaws in the design, installation or use of heating equipment.

"The good news is that most of these fires are preventable. It's just a matter of being aware that these hazards exist and taking the necessary steps to prevent them," said D.C. Fire and EMS Chief Adrian Thompson.

As the winter months approach, the District of Columbia Fire & EMS Department wants to encourage you and your family to practice winter fire safety by adopting the following safe practices:

- 1. Develop a family fire escape plan for your home and practice it.**
- 2. Make sure that all smoke detectors in**

your home have working batteries and have been cleaned.

- 3. Have your furnace serviced. Keep combustibles (paint cans, oily rags, paper, fabric and boxes) clear of furnaces and hot water heaters.**

- 4. Check all appliance cords for fraying, cracks, loose prongs or plugs.**

- 5. If you use a space heater, keep anything that can burn — including people, pets and furniture — at least three feet away. Make sure the cord is not frayed. Do not leave space heaters unattended, and you should not go to sleep with them plugged in.**

- 6. Never use your oven to heat your home.**

- 7. If you have a fireplace, have the proper fireplace screens (glass or metal) to prevent sparks from jumping out. Before going to sleep, put the fire out and place hot ashes in a metal can, not a paper bag.**

- 8. During snow storms, ask someone to help you clear snow away from the address numbers on your home. Keeping the address numbers visible will help emergency personnel locate your home if you need them.**

- 9. Keep dryer lint traps clean. Remember to remove lint after each cycle.**

- 10. If you use candles during holiday celebrations, please keep them and matches away from combustibles and children.**

For further information on winter fire safety tips, call the DCFEMS Fire Prevention Division at 202-727-1614.

Employers!! Employers!! Employers!!

We are looking for progressive employers who are looking to hire committed and talented older workers who desire to work part time or full time.

If your organization/company has a position, then we have candidates for you. Please contact the D.C. Office on Aging (Older Workers Employment and Training Unit) at 202-724-3662.

SPOTLIGHT ON AGING

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Sexual harassment is a form of sex discrimination which is prohibited by the Act. In addition, harassment based on any of the above protected categories is prohibited by the Act. Discrimination in violation of the Act will not be tolerated. Violators will be subjected to disciplinary action.

**It's never too late to start a life.
It's never too late for Recovery.**
Addiction Prevention and Recovery Administration.
1-888-7-WE HELP.



Government of the District of Columbia
Anthony A. Williams, Mayor

James A. Buford
Interim Director, District of Columbia
Department of Health

